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Calgary metro

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GIFT IDEA

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metroLIFE

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday. JEFF MCINTOSH/ THE CANADIAN PRESS

NO TRUMP, NO PROBLEM

Trudeau says Canada ready to capitalize if U.S. backs away from climate fight metroNEWS

Stoplight pilot puts people first

INTERSECTION

Pedestrian safety to take precedence on roads in 2017

Helen Pike
Metro | Calgary

In 2017, the city is literally putting pedestrians first, with a pilot measure that will see walkers take precedent over vehicles in select intersections.

The city's pedestrian strategy gives the city a mandate to trial a bunch of measures and tools that will separate "conflicts" between people walking and turning vehicles, and a Leading Pedestrian Interval is one of those techniques.

"You give pedestrians a short head start, usually three to five seconds before the green light comes on in the same direction for cars," said city transportation planner Jonathan Chapman. "They can get a couple of steps out and be visible before a car makes that quick right turn, or even left turn."

Chapman said that intersection interaction is one of the most common collision types in the city.

So, in 2017, the city will seek out five locations where that specific collision history exists to pilot this small change. Then the spots will be measured to see how effective the change is.

Kimberley Nelson, a Vision Zero Calgary advocate, said these types of tweaks help improve pedestrian visibility.

"By the time the light changes for the cars you're already halfway out," she said. "Any action that they take to put the pedestrian first is obviously going to be good."

She said timing separations are good in many applications, like on the cycle track. She's hoping in the future the city can include more pedestrian refuges (cement barriers where walkers can rest mid-crossing) into street design.

If you're looking out for these crossings, don't. They won't be making a big deal about the LPI changes, Chapman said they want the change to be intuitive.

"If they don't just work, then we're not going to use them," Chapman said. "They will be out there next year, but people may not be aware."

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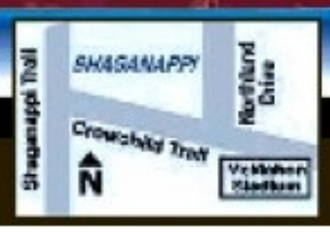

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metro NEWS

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Mark Zuckerberg unveils artificial intelligence assistant named Jarvis, voiced by Morgan Freeman.

IN BRIEF

Massage therapist charged with sex assault

Calgary Police have charged a massage therapist with sexual assault after a woman was allegedly assaulted during the course of a couple's massage.

On Dec. 3 at about 10 a.m., a woman and her husband went to Royal Orchid Thai Spa and Massage at 9550 Macleod Trail SE for a couple's massage. It was during that appointment the alleged assault took place, police said. Walter Montano-Agudelo, 35, of Calgary is charged with one count of sexual assault. METRO

Sentencing in January for man who killed seniors

The sentencing hearing for a man convicted of killing two missing Alberta seniors is to resume in the new year.

Crown and defence lawyers have finished calling witnesses and are to present closing arguments in the case of Travis Vader on Jan. 3.

Vader was found guilty of manslaughter in the 2010 deaths of Lyle and Marie McCann.

The couple, in their late 70s, vanished after leaving their Edmonton-area home on a camping trip to British Columbia.

A judge ruled that Vader was a desperate drug addict who came across the McCanns in their motorhome and killed them during a robbery.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sydney Gill sings an indigenous song at the Longest Night of The Year memorial service held Wednesday in Olympic Plaza.

JENNIFER FRIESEN / FOR METRO

Longest Night pays tribute to homeless

LOST LIVES

Memorial held in hundreds of cities around the world

Brodie Thomas
Metro | Calgary

For the third year in a row, members of the homeless community and people from all walks of life got together to remember people who lost their lives while living in homelessness.

The Longest Night of the Year is an event held in hundreds of cities around the world, and Calgary is now on that list.

The event at Olympic Plaza featured prayers, indigenous songs and drumming, speeches and a reading of the names of 30 people who have died in the past year while living homeless.

Nigel Kirk spearheaded the first Calgary event in 2014. He said that night it was an informal gathering of a few individuals, with no permits to hold the event.

This year, with close to 100 in attendance, Kirk said they wanted to make sure it was accessible to the homeless.

A group called YYC Helping Homeless served up chili, soup and rolls at Celebration Square prior to the event. Kirk said the meals at most of the major shelters overlap with the service.

Darren Mycroft, a member of the Client Action Committee with the Calgary Homeless Foundation, said the outdoor service fills a void.

"This event is really important because people who pass away while experiencing homelessness often don't get memorial services. There's no gathering for friends and family, there's no chance to say goodbye," he said.

Attendee Pamela Beebe said she had resorted to couch surfing in the past, even as a student and a new professional with a job.

"To me that was really close to being homeless, because I remember one time I had nowhere to go — no idea where to go."

She said many forget that the homeless are real people too, with family and friends. She felt they deserve to be remembered in a special way.

CHESTERMERE

Tax woes plague residents

Aaron Chatha
Metro | Calgary

A 7.8 per cent tax increase on Chestermere utilities caused on uproar on social media this week, with residents railing against high taxes.

This time last year, Chestermere Utility Inc. (CUI) proposed an increase of 25 per cent. The CUI claimed Chestermere residents had actually been undercharged for three years (CUI has only existed since 2012) and the large rate hike was to make up for those deficiencies. The CUI is owned by the city, but operates independently.

While the hike didn't go through, Mayor Patricia Matthews said it forced Chestermere to take on the role of a regulator. CUI came back with a proposed 15 per cent increase this year. Council took this to a third-party consultant and reviewed internally, and this week they passed the 7.8 per cent increase.

"We looked at every angle we could to ensure the very best rate possible was put forward, while still allowing CUI to be financially sustainable," said Matthews.

But for some residents it's still too high, especially after years of increases and the current economy.

"It scares me because it hasn't stopped in 10 years. It's getting too expensive to live here," said resident and business owner Laurie Bold. "Seriously, I'm considering selling the house. Residents feel jaded."

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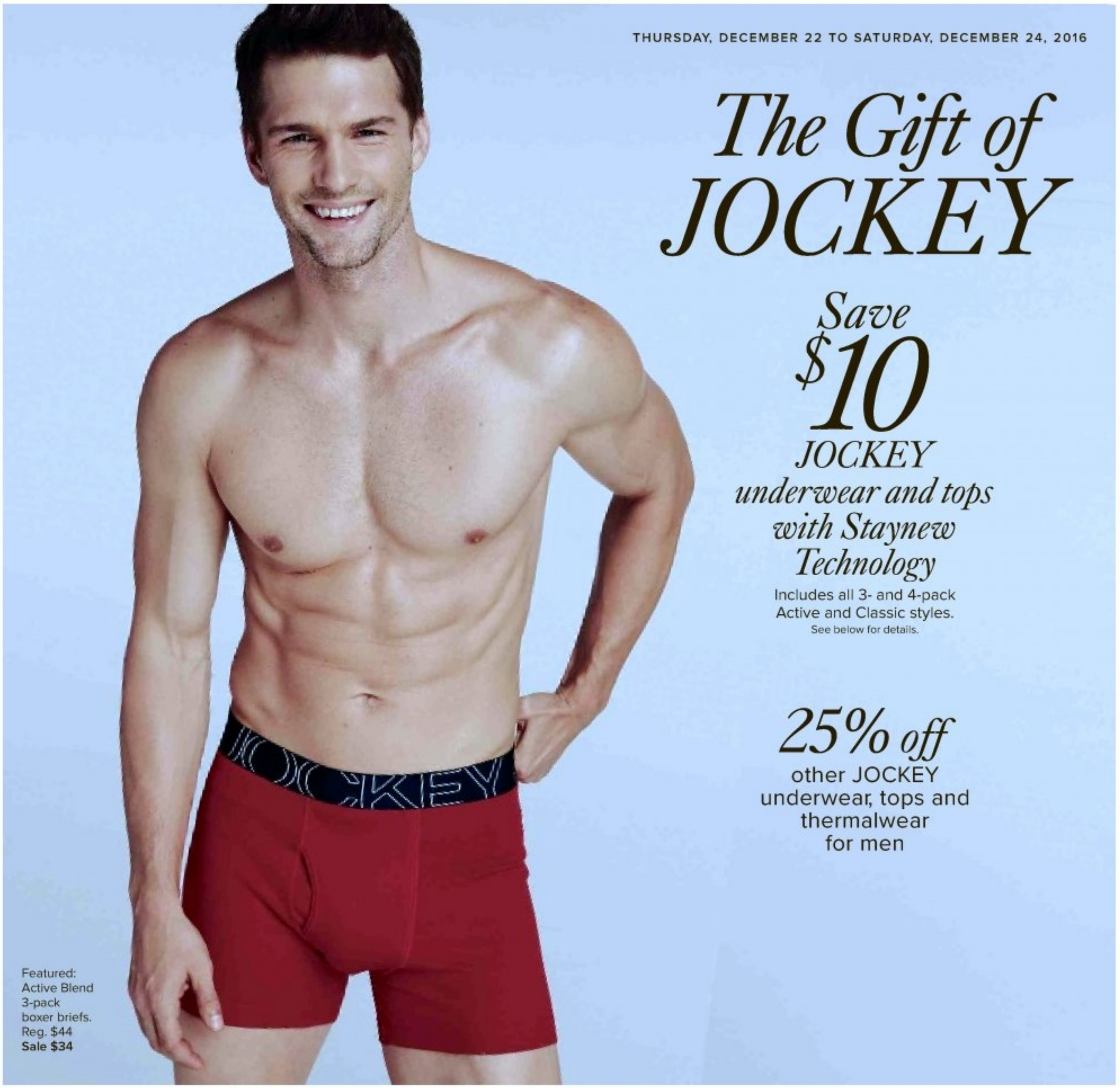
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Transit fares rising after one-year freeze

TRANSPORTATION

Passes going up by a toonie, various fares hiked a dime

Helen Pike
Metro | Calgary

It cost the city $8.8 million to freeze fares at the 2015 level. JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO

As the freeze thaws for transit fares, here's your friendly reminder: Calgary Transit is going to be a little pricier in the New Year.

Although council opted to keep fares for 2016 at the 2015 levels, your tickets and passes will be going up again in 2017 and 2018 — as they've done every year.

But the blow isn't as hard as it could have been. Instead of rising from $99 a month in 2015, to $103 in 2016 and $105 in 2018, Calgarians are spared two toonies with passes landing at a cool $101 per month this year with the various fares up a dime, or so, depending.

Mary George, an avid Transit user, said these increases are hurting a lot of people who struggle to make ends meet, but don't qualify for a subsidized pass. She said raising transit fares means making hard choices.

"$2 extra for a pass doesn't sound like a lot when you have money," George said. "But if you are poor that can be two boxes of KD or a few packages of Ichiban and that translates to a few days of food for some folks."

It cost the city $8.8 million in 2015 to freeze fares, and next year, they're launching the first iteration of a sliding scale for low-income Calgarians, which could see more people qualifying for low-income passes.

"Regardless of the economy the way it is, the city still has expenses to pay," said Coun. Shane Keating. "This is looking after both aspects, the taxpayer not footing the bill for everything and the fare rider paying a little more for their transportation."

TRANSIT

Nenshi calling for a carbon tax break

The carbon tax could mean more transit fee woes for Calgarians, according to Mayor Naheed Nenshi.

In 2017, the carbon tax will cost transit an estimated $3 million annually in operational costs — and no, transit doesn't seem to be eligible for a rebate like some Calgarians are.

Nenshi said the city will be able to deal with the carbon tax costs for 2017 through the city's reserve funding, but administration won't be able to subsidize the province forever.

He said there's three options for the city, if the NDP continue with their "taxing of another order of government." The city can cut service hours, increase fares, or replace all of its buses with electric numbers.

"The investment that will be required to do that is far greater for the provincial government than just giving transit a rebate," said Nenshi.

The mayor said as the city converts diesel to compressed natural gas buses, electric may come into that process, but to speed up the city's strategic plans in order to make up for the carbon tax is going to be very expensive.

"That's many many many hundreds of millions of dollars over a long period of time," said Nenshi. "You don't swap them all in one year."

HELEN PIKE/METRO

Mayor Naheed Nenshi says the carbon tax will cost transit an estimated $3 million annually in operational costs.
METRO FILE

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INVESTIGATION

Deputy police chief cleared of obstruction

Lucie Edwardson
Metro | Calgary

Calgary's police deputy chief, Sat Parhar, has been cleared following an ASIRT investigation into allegations of obstruction of justice, and he says he's glad the nearly two-year investigation has wrapped up.

"Twenty-three months is a long time for something like this and it really reflected on our people," said Parhar.

Parhar said the length of the investigation speaks to some of the reforms Alberta law enforcement hopes to see with ASIRT in the near future.

"What's really important for people to understand is that this may be about me, but there is a bigger picture here in regards to length of time these things take."

In a news release Wednesday, the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team said that following an investigation that began in April of this year, Parhar, who was a superintendent at the time of the allegations, has been cleared of "serious and sensitive allegations," essentially amounting to obstruction of justice.

ASIRT said that in 2015, a CPS member made a formal complaint that on Feb. 19, 2013, they disclosed possible police misconduct to Parhar. The officer claimed that Parhar "deliberately failed to act on the report of misconduct" until a time that an investigation or any disciplinary action would be barred.

"There is no evidence that the subject officer deliberately acted to obstruct an investigation," said ASIRT, adding that an investigation was in fact started and pursued. "There are no reasonable grounds, nor even reasonable suspicion, to believe on the evidence that the subject officer committed any criminal offence."

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tours the MacPhail School of Energy at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology Polytechnic Wednesday. JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada committed on climate

CARBON TAX

If Trump pulls back, we'll be ready to capitalize: PM

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says if the United States takes a step back on fighting climate change under Donald Trump, Canada will capitalize.

At a Calgary speech to business owners, Trudeau was asked whether he was committed to his climate plan, which includes a national price on carbon, even if it makes Canada less competitive with the U.S. under the incoming president, who has sent mixed messages on the climate issue.

"Let's see what the president actually does once he becomes president and what he says and let's not overreact ahead of time. But the challenge of climate change isn't a debate or linked to a political ideology. It's a fact," Trudeau responded Wednesday.

"We know that this is the way the world is going and if the United States wants to take a step back from it, quite frankly, I think we should look at that as an extraordinary opportunity for Canada and for Canadians."

He said that opportunity exists with investors who are looking 10 to 20 years down the road.

"We know that maybe there is a potential for short-term benefit by not engaging in the environment as strongly, but we also know that in the medium-term and the long-term, jobs of the future, the opportunities for economic growth, the well-being of our citizens and future generations is going to be linked to figuring out better and smarter ways to do things."

Trump has sent mixed signals on whether he will try to slow Earth's warming temperatures and rising sea levels.

Since he was elected, Trump has met with prominent climate activists Al Gore and Leonardo DiCaprio. He's suggested his daughter Ivanka, a close adviser, has a particular interest in the issue and could be his envoy.

> **We know that this is the way the world is going.**
> Justin Trudeau

But he has also tapped oil industry champions for his cabinet, men who say they're determined to reverse President Barack Obama's efforts to rein in emissions.

Trudeau has been largely circumspect in commenting on Trump's pending presidency, but in a year-end interview with The Canadian Press earlier this week, the prime minister emphasized that he would not hesitate to protect Canadian interest and values if they clash with Trump's agenda.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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He was 'just a punk'

HALIFAX

Senior recounts brutal attack that outraged a city

Zane Woodford
Metro | Halifax

An 85-year-old woman says she was "petrified" as she was repeatedly punched in the face and dragged from her home during a brutal assault in Halifax.

Police say they were called to Jeanette MacDonald's home Tuesday night.

MacDonald said she was home alone when there was a knock at the door. She called out to ask who was there, and when there was no answer, she went to the door.

"I opened the door, and the first thing he said was, 'Give me the money.' I said, 'What the hell are you talking about, I'm not giving you no money.' And he hit me with his fist in my face," MacDonald said in an interview Wednesday morning.

Jeanette MacDonald was bruised after a home invasion at her basement apartment. JEFF HARPER/METRO

MacDonald said the man, who she'd never seen before, told her he had a gun and knife. She continued to refuse his demands for money, and he dragged her outside.

"He said, 'Here's one for ya,' and he let me have it right in the face again," she said.

> **"I said, 'What the hell are you talking about, I'm not giving you no money.'**
> Jeanette MacDonald

MacDonald's neighbours rushed to her side when they heard her cries for help.

"I was screaming, I couldn't stand the pain," MacDonald said.

She said the suspect ran away behind her home.

"Just a punk, that's all he was," MacDonald said.

Paramedics treated MacDonald's injuries at the scene. On Wednesday morning, she had two black eyes, a large bruise on her chest, and her hand was swollen.

"I'm not feeling too bad now, like I was at first, but I'm sore," she said.

Halifax police spokeswoman Const. Dianne Penfound said Wednesday afternoon that police had no further leads or information on the case.

Woman claims she was fired for lack of heels

Haley Ryan
Metro | Halifax

A Dartmouth single mom is questioning whether her recent firing from a popular Halifax nightclub was over high heels, but her employer says they did everything "in line with labour standards."

Ally Robinson, 25, said she's worked in the service industry for years, including at Grafton Connor Group locations like Cheers, and as a bartender at The Dome since October. Last Friday, Robinson said a manager sent her home for not wearing high heels during her shift.

The next day, Robinson said she was dismissed by the same woman who told her she was being let go due to not wearing heels, but then added, according to Robinson, "I don't need to give you a reason at all," because the 25-year-old was still under the probation period.

"It doesn't seem fair," Robinson says.

AFGHANISTAN

Grandkids seen for first time on video

The parents of a Canadian man held in Afghanistan say a recently released video of their son and his family marks the first time they've seen their two grandchildren, who were born in captivity.

Canadian Joshua Boyle and his wife, Caitlan Coleman, were kidnapped in 2012 while travelling in northern Afghanistan.

Boyle's parents, Patrick and Linda, said they watched the video Monday, getting their first look at their grandsons.

TWITTER

"It is an indescribable emotional sense one has watching a grandson making faces at the camera, while hearing our son's leg chains clanging up and down on the floor," the Boyles said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

WEATHER

Most Canadians will have a white Christmas, meteorologist says

The Weather Network says most Canadians dreaming of a white Christmas will have something to celebrate this year.

Chief Meteorologist Chris Scott says large swaths of the country will see at least two centimetres of snow on the ground on Christmas morning.

Regions likely to experience a white Christmas span the country and include Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Fredericton and the three territorial capitals.

Scott says the odds are longer in places like the coast of British Columbia, Calgary, Halifax and St. John's, but won't rule out the possibility.

He says much of the coverage will come from previous snowfalls, but warns at least one area should brace for a major new storm.

He says most of Manitoba, part of eastern Saskatchewan and northwestern Ontario are in the path of a significant weather system that has potential to disrupt holiday travel plans on Christmas or Boxing Day.

"This one coming for the southern Prairies...that's one where I would already start thinking about changing my plans," Scott said in a telephone interview. "We encourage people to monitor the situation for watches and warnings that would be issued. You just do not want to be travelling anywhere, it looks like, in southern Manitoba."

Scott said precipitation is also possible across parts of Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes, but does not anticipate those systems will be as significant as the one descending on Manitoba and expected to strike on Christmas evening and Boxing Day.

He said that storm is expected to stretch into the United States, possibly complicating travel for those heading south of the border.

Closer to home, however, conditions are largely expected to remain stable.

Nova Scotia too is likely to see more green than white, he said, adding Newfoundland and Labrador may yet get a dusting of snow in time for the holidays.

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POLITICS

Feds aim to prevent anti-trade backlash

Justin Trudeau says his government's focus on bolstering the middle class is aimed at insulating Canada from the kind of populist rage that is fuelling political upheaval elsewhere around the globe.

And affordable housing will be central to his approach in the coming year.

In a year-end roundtable interview, the prime minister acknowledged that Canadians are not immune to the anxiety that is fuelling anti-globalization, anti-trade, anti-immigration and anti-government sentiment around the world.

Among other things, he said, Canadians are worried about job security, retirement security, and their children's economic prospects.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday. JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Trudeau said that feeling of anxiety is not unique to Canada, pointing to Britain's impending departure from the European Union, the rise of populist and nationalist parties in Europe, and the turn that the American election took.

The key to preventing that rage from boiling over here as it has elsewhere, Trudeau said, is to ensure that middle class Canadians feel they're getting a fair share of the benefits from economic growth.

"In the choices we're making, that's the direction we're taking and it's a little bit heading off some of the issues being faced around the world right now where there is a lashing out at institutions for having failed. And what we see is when people lash out at policies that create growth, and you eliminate growth, not only do the wealthy suffer, but everyone else suffers even more.

"So there's a careful line we're trying to walk to demonstrate that growth that includes the middle class is really the only way to get out of this challenging context around globalization that we're facing." THE CANADIAN PRESS

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ASSASSINATION

Turkey links killer to American cleric

Turkey's president on Wednesday implicated a U.S.-based Muslim cleric in the killing of Russia's envoy to Turkey, saying the policeman who carried out the attack was a member of his "terror organization."

Ambassador Andrei Karlov was killed Monday by a gunman in front of stunned onlookers at a photo exhibition in Ankara. The assassin, Mevlut Mert Altintas of Ankara's riot police squad, was killed in a police operation.

"He (Altintas) was a member of the FETO terrorist organization. There is no point in hiding this," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said during a joint news conference with his visiting Albanian counterpart. "From the places he was raised to his connections — that's what they point at."

Turkey has accused Fethullah Gulen — a former ally who has turned into Erdogan's top foe — of trying to destabilize Turkey and says his movement is behind a failed military coup in July aimed at toppling the Turkish leader. Gulen has denied any involvement in the coup. His movement also condemned "in the strongest terms" the ambassador's assassination.

Turkey is pressing the U.S. to extradite Gulen so he may be prosecuted for the coup attempt and other alleged crimes.

Erdogan said that Turkey's intelligence agency was also looking into Altintas' possible foreign connections, saying there were "certain clues" indicating overseas links.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ALSO IN TURKEY

Bana Alabed, a seven-year-old Syrian girl who was evacuated Monday from Aleppo and whose mother ran a Twitter account in her name met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara. The account has garnered some 354,000 followers.

Officials walk through the rubble of the San Pablito fireworks market that exploded in Tultepec on the outskirts of Mexico City, Wednesday. The market was well-stocked for the holidays and bustling with hundreds of shoppers. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Searching for loved ones and answers after blast

MEXICO

Officials say it's too early to identify cause of explosion

Relatives of workers at a fireworks market flattened by a deadly chain-reaction explosion searched hospitals for loved ones Wednesday as attention focused on apparent lax security that allowed vendors to display their dangerous wares in the passageways between stalls.

Health Secretary Cesar Gomez Monge of Mexico State, where the San Pablito Market is located, said another victim died in a hospital, raising the fatal toll to 32. About 46 people remained hospitalized, five of them in such serious condition that they were fighting for their lives, he added. Ten of the injured were minors including one girl with burns over 90 per cent of her body.

Juana Antolina Hernandez, who has run a stand for 22 years in San Pablito next to one operated by her parents, escaped the market in a mad dash when the explosions began Tuesday afternoon. The following day she was one of the disconsolate residents waiting outside a local morgue.

> **This demonstrates the lack of care and attention not just here but in the whole state.**
> Alejandra Barrales

"I can't find my father, and my mother is very badly burned," said Hernandez, 49. "I am waiting here for them to tell me if my father is here, but up to this point, nothing."

Officials in Mexico State, which borders Mexico City, said it was too early to identify a cause of the massive series of blasts.

The president of the leftist Democratic Revolution Party, Alejandra Barrales, noted that fireworks accidents take place regularly including four this year alone.

"This demonstrates the lack of care and attention not just here but in the whole state," Barrales said in a statement.

Mexico State chief prosecutor Alejandro Gomez said some of the dead were so badly burned that neither their age nor their gender could be immediately determined, and that DNA tests would be needed. He said the toll could rise because 12 people were listed as missing and some body parts were found at the scene. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BERLIN

Officials monitored truck attack suspect

German officials had deemed the Tunisian man being sought in a manhunt across Europe a threat long before a truck plowed into a Christmas market in Berlin — and even kept him under covert surveillance for six months this year before halting the operation.

Now the international manhunt for Anis Amri — considered the prime suspect in Monday's deadly rampage — is raising questions about how closely German authorities are monitoring the hundreds of known Islamic extremists in the country.

The issue puts new pressure on Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is running for re-election next year. Critics are lambasting her for allowing hundreds of thousands of asylum-seekers to enter the country, allegedly without proper security checks.

Among them was Amri, a convicted criminal in both Tunisia and Italy who successfully evaded deportation from Germany even as German authorities rejected his asylum application and deemed him a possible jihadi threat. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EXTREME WEATHER

Aid groups warn of crisis as Mongolia hit by harsh winter

A herder walks past a pile of dead animals in the hills of Hentii, Mongolia, after a severe snowstorm in 2001. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Another unusually harsh winter in Mongolia that's decimating livestock and sending temperatures to -56 C may create a humanitarian crisis, with worse conditions still to come, aid groups warn.

Save the Children and the International Federation of the Red Cross said Wednesday that this winter will likely see vast swathes of the Mongolian steppe affected by the extreme weather phenomenon known in Mongolia as "dzud."

A dzud typically happens once a decade but could strike for the second consecutive year. The dzud last year killed more than a million animals, afflicting the majority of Mongolians who depend on livestock for food, milk and income.

The Mongolian government said last week it met with international organizations including Save the Children, the Red Cross and the United Nations Development Program to discuss efforts to deliver heating, fuel and medical supplies amid "worsening" conditions and heavy snowfall since October.

> **It's a natural disaster on top of an economic crisis.**
> Davaajargal Batdorj

Aid groups say the situation is compounded by last year's harsh winter and a deep recession amid a market bust for Mongolia's mineral exports. The country is struggling to repay debt with its hard currency stocks while household savings have also evaporated.

Red Cross disaster program manager in Mongolia Davaajargal Batdorj said more livestock deaths are expected this year with far northwestern areas of the country already buried under one metre of snow. The organization will begin sending cash to herder families in the far west in the coming weeks.

"It's a natural disaster on top of an economic crisis," Davaajargal said.

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Broadband is a basic service: Regulator

INTERNET ACCESS

Providers must offer unlimited options, speeds of 50 Mbps

Canada's telecom regulator has declared broadband internet access a basic service across the country, just like current landline telephone service.

But making full access to ultra-high-speed services a reality could cost tens of billions of dollars, and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission said Wednesday that achieving the goal will take a coordinated effort by it, businesses and governments.

The aim is to ensure service providers (ISPs) offer internet services nationwide at speeds of at least 50 megabits per second for downloading data, and 10 Mbps for uploads, the CRTC said in announcing the new targets. Currently, about 82 per cent of households and businesses receive that level of service. The CRTC wants that increased to 90 per cent by 2021.

ISPs will also be required to offer unlimited data options for fixed broadband services.

CRTC Chairman Jean-Pierre Blais announces the ruling on basic telecommunications service. THE CANADIAN PRESS

As well, the most advanced mobile wireless service should be made available to all households and businesses throughout Canada, as well as along all major Canadian roads, the regulator said.

"Access to broadband internet service is vital and a basic telecommunication service all Canadians are entitled to receive," said CRTC chairman Jean-Pierre Blais.

As part of the decision, telecom firms will have access to an escalating $750-million industry-sponsored fund over the next five years to invest in broadband infrastructure.

The first $100 million of that will come from a fund that currently subsidizes telephone services in isolated regions.

Advocacy group OpenMedia, regularly one of the CRTC's sharpest critics, was elated at Wednesday's declaration.

"It's a real game changer, especially for rural and underserved communities right across the country," said OpenMedia spokesman David Christopher.

Telecom giant Rogers Inc. called the CRTC plan acceptable, pointing out that it already offers services at speeds of up to 20 times faster than the new target.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

EMPLOYMENT

Face-to-face crucial for young job seekers

A new report from the federal government's expert panel on youth employment points to a need to move away from digital services for young, first-time job seekers and instead offer more person-to-person contacts and services.

In an interim report released Wednesday, the panel described how young people complete hundreds of online job applications without receiving any response from employers and that the reliance on using personal networks to find jobs is unreasonably high.

> **We are deluding ourselves if we think digitizing the job application process makes it more democratic.**
> Vass Bednar

Young people with the most success at landing a job do so through the people they know and for those without such a network, the necessity to build connections can be overly intimidating, the report said.

"We are deluding ourselves if we think that by digitizing the job application process we are making it more democratic. Network effects are as strong as ever and this hurts young people with less social capital," said panel chairwoman Vass Bednar.

The panel's interim report found young Canadians have high levels of anxiety about their future work prospects, even those with post-secondary education and previous job experience — two keys frequently cited as an avenue to a good job.

A Statistics Canada study released earlier this month showed that young people have seen their job quality decline over 40 years, even as the youth unemployment rate has remained relatively unchanged. In both 1976 and 2015 it was 2.3 times higher than the rate among those aged 25 and older.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Thursday, December 22, 2016

CHANTAL HÉBERT ON POLITICAL NEWS' DECENTRALIZATION

The days when there was something special or newsworthy about a broadcaster serving up a prime minister to a festive nation have gone.

Once a staple of the holiday news season, the televised prime ministerial fireside chats are well on the way to joining the ghosts of Christmases past.

The CBC and Radio-Canada — among others — have opted out of the format, rightly concluding that the days when there was something special or, for that matter, newsworthy about deferentially serving up a prime minister to a festive nation had gone.

So have the days when a government leader had to rely on a handful of major networks to reach a national audience.

Interviews with the prime minister are a dime a dozen this December. On top of various year-end Parliament Hill interviews and a news conference, Trudeau has spent the past week on a year-end tour.

At the end of last week, he was in Montreal taking questions from Radio-Canada viewers. This week he spent time in Vancouver and Calgary.

There was a time when a contingent of Parliament Hill reporters would have tagged along. But trips outside the parliamentary precinct are so few now, as it is possible to catch Trudeau live in action from one's computer at no cost to media organizations.

This year marked the 150th anniversary of the Parliamentary Press Gallery. For its members, it was a bittersweet occasion.

In tandem with the larger journalism universe the gallery's membership has been shrinking. That may be even truer of the institution's collective influence. The challenging economics of journalism tell only part of the story.

When I came to Parliament Hill in the late '80s, Le Devoir's Montreal-based justice reporter would hop on a bus and travel to Ottawa every time the Supreme Court released a major ruling.

Collecting it in person was the only way to get the text of a decision on the day it was rendered. For that reason, larger news organizations often based their justice reporter on Parliament Hill.

With the exception of the televised House debates, pretty much anything that happened around or on the Hill was only accessible to journalists who were physically present on the premises. It was impossible to keep up with the narrative at a distance from the capital. The members of the gallery truly were the ears and eyes of Canadians on Parliament Hill for more than a century.

These days, most of the fireworks in Canadian political news comes from reporters and commentators outside Ottawa.
THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

But today, the Globe and Mail's André Picard writes the most authoritative health-policy column on offer … from Montreal.

In English as in French, the bulk of the immigration and foreign-policy commentary and analysis no longer emanates from Parliament Hill bureaus.

Every year, the budget lockup draws a gaggle of columnists and editorialists who normally toil in Montreal and Toronto. With access to federal finance documents at the tip of anyone's fingers, more fiscal policy coverage than ever is done outside the federal capital. And, of course, it is no longer necessary to have a desk a few blocks down from the Supreme Court to obtain its rulings in real time.

The much-watched At Issue panel on CBC's The National has never had a permanent member whose exclusive workplace was Parliament Hill. (I have been splitting my time between the federal capital and Montreal for 20 years.) And yet parliamentary insiders regularly vote it as the most influential media panel.

Over the years, a lot of policy expertise and knowledge has been farmed out of the press gallery, and, with it, many of the relationships that ministers and mandarins used to nurture with those who were on the beats that pertained to their portfolios.

As a consequence but also as the result of the practice of clickbaiting, the ratio of politics reporting versus public policy coverage coming out of the parliamentary press has steadily increased. The press gallery has become more diverse but polls suggest its output has tended to become less germane to the priorities of voters.

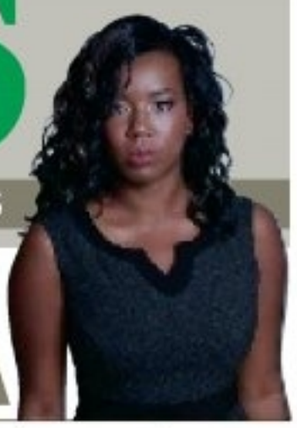
Parliament Hill remains the only place in the country where conflicting political currents come to clash. The dynamics are a must-watch for anyone who wants to understand how complex Canada is. That is not easily done via a computer screen.

It is impossible to imagine national political coverage without a parliamentary component. But regardless of their number, the daily reporting of Parliament Hill media insiders is probably no more likely to be restored to pride of place in the national conversation than the cosy fireside chats of the not-so-distant past.

Over the years, a lot of policy expertise and knowledge has been farmed out of the parliamentary press gallery.

Chantal Hébert is a national affairs writer.

VICKY MOCHAMA



It's better to give than to receive, but taking has its place, too

In the lead-up to the Plunderer-Elect of the United States taking the oath of office, it's become clear that this is the Age of the Thief.

Almost every cabinet appointment seems designed to enrich either the Trumps or their billionaire friends. Trump is draining the swamp but only so he can sell the water back to the thirsty swamp dwellers in gold-embossed bottles.

The next four years will consist of so many bold acts of theft. And not just in the United States.

In Toronto, police are searching for a white male who has robbed five downtown banks in the last month. However, knowing that the public loves a criminal they can cheer for — hello, all superheroes — the police have adorably named him the "lunchtime bandit." Such creativity from a force that has only managed to come up with Black Male Known To Police for so many other suspects.

(If I'm ever arrested, please tell the police my moniker is White Woman.)

The robber is brazen but only because he knows that no one suspects clean-cut white men of crimes. He can simply slide a note to a teller saying he's armed and be out of there in minutes.

According to Staff Insp. Mike Earl, this particular perp might not be all bad. "Maybe he's never been in trouble before," he said. "Maybe he's an educated individual who's down and out and this is his only hope to get some kind of money."

That is exactly the kind of empathy that we'll need in the coming years. No one is a criminal anymore! Donald Trump isn't a fascist and a kleptocrat. He's just "an educated individual" trying to make a living.

For that reason, Doris Payne is my Pilferer of the Year. Doris is an international jewel thief who has spent over five decades stealing expensive jewelry. And getting away with it. My girl Doris, who is 86, was arrested just last week for stealing a necklace in suburban Atlanta.

While former stockbroker and convicted fraudster Jordan Belfort got an Oscar-worthy portrayal by Leonardo DiCaprio, Doris's 50 years of high-stakes thievery has so far only generated rumours of a Halle Berry-attached biopic.

(DiCaprio himself seems to like a scammer; he also played conman-turned-FBI consultant Frank Abagnale in 2002's Catch Me If You Can.)

Doris Payne's story is like the Thomas Crowne Affair meets the Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, but starring a fabulous and unrepentant black woman. What does a black woman have to steal to get Viola Davis to play her?

In this season of giving, let's not forget to celebrate the takers.

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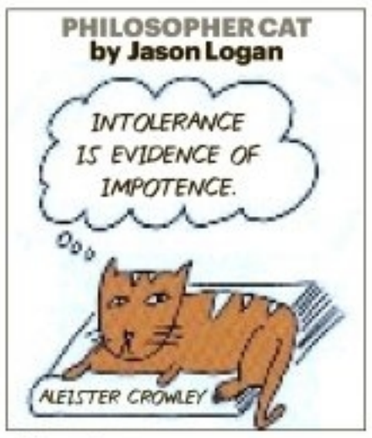

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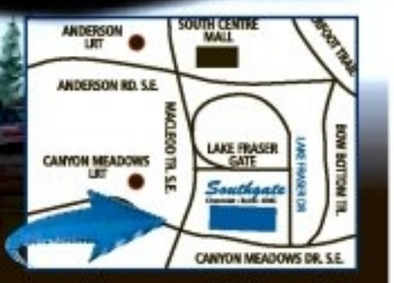

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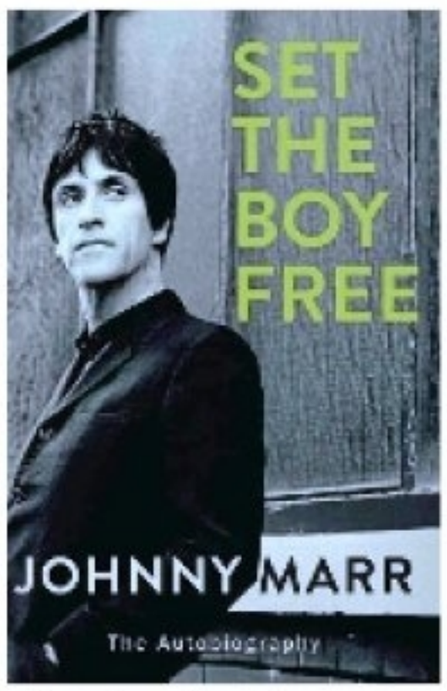
Movie magic is real: Disney is first studio to break $7 billion globally at the box office this year

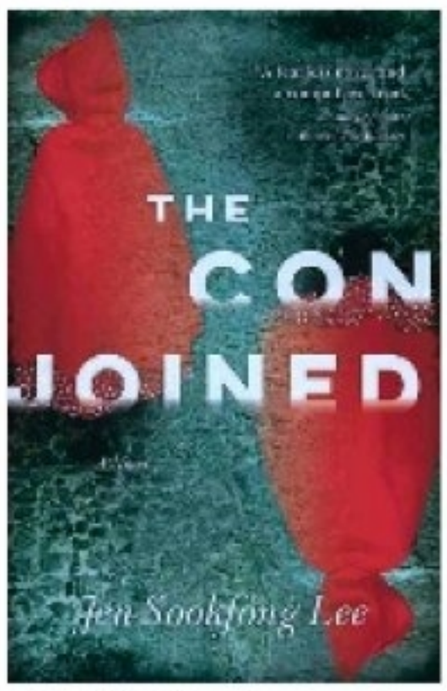
Overlooked but wonderful reads

With thousands of books published each year, narrowing down a new holiday read or gift can be daunting. There are the award winners and the bestsellers, the book club picks and the big names. But if you're looking for something a little different, here are five titles worth seeking out: **SUE CARTER/FOR METRO**



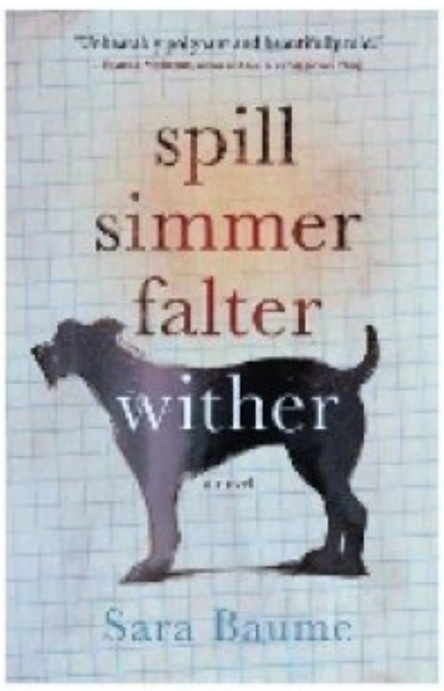
The fascinating Mr Smiths

In a year dominated by memoirs from Bruce Springsteen, Amy Schumer and Carrie Fisher, it was easy to miss Johnny Marr's **Set the Boy Free**. Marr and Morrissey, who co-formed the beloved 1980s band the Smiths, became as famous for their contentious break-up as their writing partnership. But Marr's entertaining autobiography keeps the mudslinging to a minimum, delivering a delightful history of a life dedicated to music.



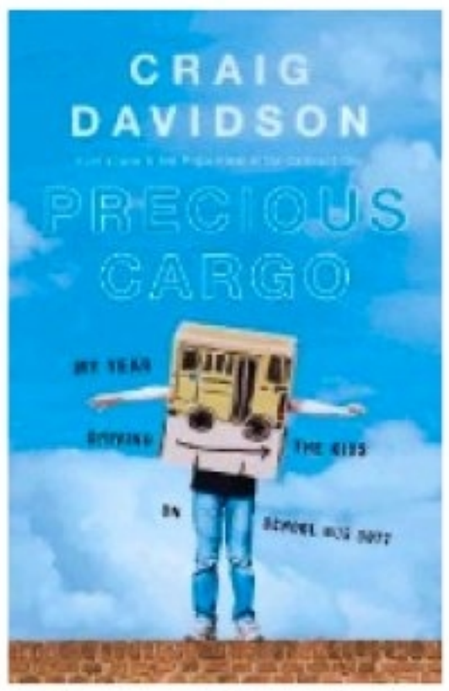
Thrill ride through Vancouver

Vancouver author Jen Sookfong Lee combines literary and crime fiction in her third novel **The Conjoined**, about a social worker who discovers the bodies of two girls — who turn out to be long-missing troubled foster children — in her recently deceased mother's freezers. Lee draws from Vancouver's social history, pop culture and an exploration of family dynamics for a woman-focused, refreshing take on the traditional thriller.



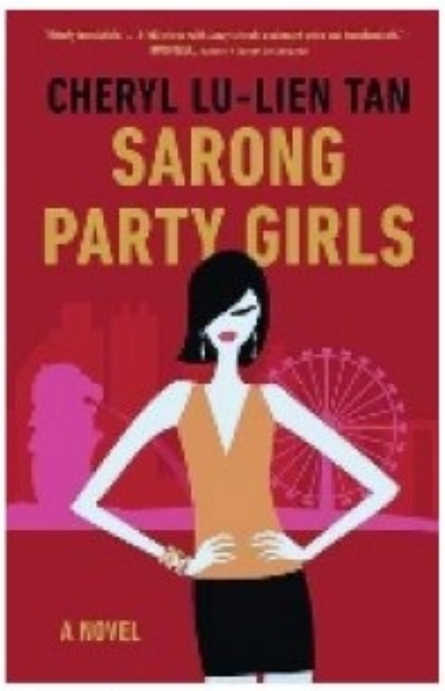
Man and dog in dark times

Before it was published in Canada this year, Irish writer Sara Baume received a long list of accolades in the U.K. for her debut novel **Spill Simmer Falter Wither**, set in a small village inspired by her own home. Baume breathes new life into an old trope about a man and his dog, with beautiful, lyrical language and a startling, dark conclusion. This is one of the most quietly devastating books of the year.



A funny, charming bus journey

Craig Davidson has earned a tough-guy reputation, both for his hard-hitting books (and the film adaptation of Rust and Bone) and his horror-writing pseudonym Nick Cutter. In his charming memoir **Precious Cargo: My Year of Driving the Kids on School Bus 3077**, the Calgary author recalls a tough period when he took a job driving a bus for special-needs students, proving that he is also sensitive and empathetic, with a sharp sense of humour.



Single women on a mission

Journalist Cheryl Lu-Lien Tan's first novel, **Sarong Party Girls**, explores the lives of Jazzy and her friends, all twenty-something Singapore women on a mission to snag rich *ang moh* (Western expat) husbands and to give birth to "Chanel babies." Told in 'Singlish' — a hybrid patois of Singaporean English — Tan, who did plenty of research to capture the scene, exposes a sordid but fascinating world of nightclubs and lounges ruled by racism and misogyny.

Bringing back an old-school Legend

INTERVIEW

Singer's role in La La Land sees him return to musical past

When he was a kid, multiple Grammy winner John Legend was in high school musicals, including You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown and Fiddler on the Roof. So perhaps it was in the cards for him to take on two roles in La La Land, a movie being credited with re-energizing the classic genre.

Written and directed by Damien Chazelle, La La Land opens on Christmas Day.

Legend is both an executive producer on the film and acts and sings onscreen as hit-seeking bandleader Keith. To prepare for the part, Legend worked with an acting coach and learned to play guitar. He also wrote the song he performs with co-star Ryan Gosling, Start a Fire.

Legend's Keith is a longtime friend of jazz musician Sebastian (Gosling), who seems far away from his dream of opening his own club. Keith's band is enjoying success with a far more commercial sound than the purity that Sebastian champions. When Keith offers him a job, it comes at a cost to Sebastian's relationship with struggling actress Mia (Emma Stone) and his vow to stay loyal to his music.

A co-writer on Glory, a Best Original Song Oscar winner from the film Selma, Legend sat down during the Toronto International Film Festival for a Canadian exclusive interview to talk about his work in La La Land.

What job came first: the executive producer or the acting?
It was all kind of bundled together in the same conversation. They wanted me to write a song for (La La Land) and possibly perform in it as an actor . . . and come on as an executive producer to help with the music. But (Chazelle) held out the possibility that he might want me to play Keith and I looked at the role and said, 'Yeah, I could do this.' I understand Keith as a character, and it's something I think I (could) do. Damien took a leap of faith because he had never seen me act before. He had to just speculate that I might be good at it and I think he's OK with his decision now.

We don't know much about the friendship between Sebastian and Keith. Did you work out a backstory?
We talked about that with Damien and basically the idea was that these guys probably went to music school together and they both kind of have the same foundation as talented musicians who come up through the jazz school of thought, but one of them decides to cleave through that tradition more and the other one decides to kind of push himself beyond the boundaries of what traditional jazz would allow. Damien didn't want one to be perceived as inherently better than the other, but just different choices. This has been seen in films before, this idea of selling your soul for rock'n'roll. Right. And so (Chazelle) wanted that tension, but he also didn't want Keith to be a crappy musician that everyone thought, 'Well, that's terrible.' He wanted it to be a viable option; this is good in its own way. It's different from what Gosling's character's trying to do, but it's still a viable option.

You feel their story, you understand what it's like to have a dream and to want to pursue that.
John Legend

John Legend with Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling in La La Land. DALE ROBINETTE/ENTERTAINMENT ONE

Why do you want to be involved with movies?
I've always loved history and . . . a lot of the films that we get involved with and the television shows we get involved with are kind of historically based. And I think film has a power to connect in a really powerful way and a beautiful way, and I love the interaction of film and music, and most of it in things I work on have that interaction where we write songs for it. For instance, Underground, a television show that we produced (for WGN America), we were very involved in the music, so I feel like it's an extension of my music career and my career as a storyteller and as an artist.

Are movie musicals an old-fashioned concept?
Great stories never go out of style. Great characters never go out of style. Great filmmaking never goes out of style. And I think the power of this film is that you feel a real human connection to Sebastian and Mia, you feel their story, you understand what it's like to have a dream and to want to pursue that. It's really great writing and great dancing, great performances. What's not to like? Even if this genre is supposedly on life support, I think Damien certainly provided enough jolt to it and reinvigorated it for 2016.

How does Ryan Gosling hold up as a musician?
Oh, he's so good! He really worked on being a great pianist for this and I was so impressed. And they (Stone and Gosling) sound great together, their singing and their dancing is just magical. It kind of took me by surprise to see how beautifully they were dancing together.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

#YYC INDEX

The Kit Compact—Canada's beauty and fashion brand—brings you Calgary's best holiday style

THE ADDRESS

LEO BOUTIQUE,

810 16th Ave.

Husband-and-wife duo Jon and Cornelia Wiebe's relationship is so strong, they named their stylish boutique after their shared zodiac sign: Leo.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF LEO BOUTIQUE.

How would you describe the Calgary aesthetic? "Calgarians have a casual style: Denim is major and worn any time, all the time!"

Of the brands you carry, what are some of your favourites? "We have collections from Opening Ceremony, Horses Atelier and Our Legacy. Our top denim brands are Nudie Jeans, Frame Denim and Ksubi."

What's exciting this season? "Shaina Mote, a Los-Angeles-based designer, is new and notable."

What's the easiest way to pull together a cool holiday outfit? "A modern look would include the Horses Atelier high pant in magenta paired with its silk high-collar blouse, accessories from Wolf Circus, a mini purse from the Stowe and footwear from United Nude. It would be perfect for a party, dinner or after-work event."

What is the top item on your personal holiday wish list? "Cote & Ciel Tigris backpack with a built-in hood and Opening Ceremony long varsity jacket...drool." —*Rida Tulpur*

MUST-TRY: **MANI HEAVEN**

If you've been looking for the perfect manicure, look no further: Calgary fave Frilly Lilly (550 6th Ave. S.E.) has opened in the East Village. Give your nails a treat by booking the signature Marvellous Manicure that includes an aroma soak in lavender bath salts, nail shaping, exfoliation with the salon's signature body scrub and a hand massage. Of course, it's all topped off with your choice of polish. Frilly Lilly's Holly Friedrich suggests keeping nails short and going for burgundy this season. "We're seeing lots of deep rich wines, magnificent magentas and yummy chocolates." —*RT*

POLISH PHOTOGRAPHY BY GEOFFREY ROSS.

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FROM THE EDITORS OF THE KIT compact

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Lena Dunham said she would never intentionally 'trivialize the challenges of terminating a pregnancy.' THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Dunham apologizes over 'joke'

ENTERTAINMENT

On her podcast star said she wished she had an abortion

Lena Dunham has apologized for saying she wished she had an abortion. Dunham made the comment on last week's episode of her Women of the Hour podcast, while talking about a self-realization.

She said that, even though she speaks against stigmatizing abortion, she found herself saying adamantly that she had never had one when she was asked to be part of a project involving women discussing their abortions.

In reference to this contradiction, she said: "Now, I can say that I still haven't had an abortion, but I wish I had."

The comment drew criticism online.

On Tuesday, the Girls star apologized on Instagram for what she called "a distasteful joke."

She said she "would never, ever intentionally trivialize the emotional and physical challenges of terminating a pregnancy."

"My only goal is to increase awareness and decrease stigma," Dunham added. "I take reproductive choice in America more seriously than I take literally anything else, and therefore own full responsibility for any words I speak that don't convey this truth clearly.

"My life is and always will be devoted to reproductive justice and freedom."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CELEBS ON INSTAGRAM

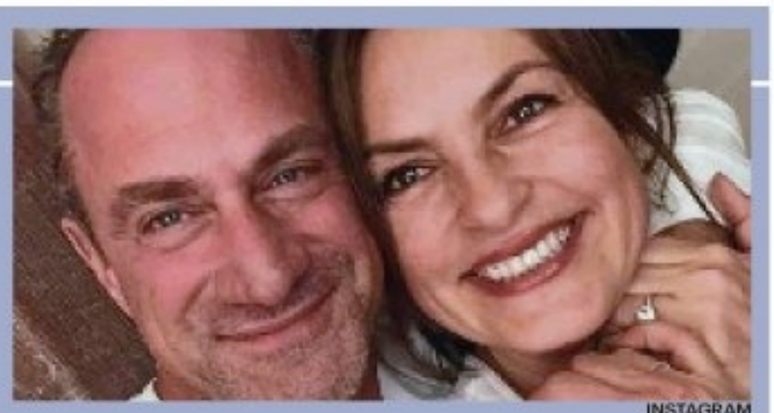
SVU crew's reunion

Former Law & Order: Special Victims Unit co-stars Mariska Hargitay and Christopher Meloni are celebrating the season with a holiday selfie.

Meloni posted a picture of himself with his arm around Hargitay on his Instagram on Tuesday, along with the caption, "Friends at Xmas." Meloni and Hargitay starred in SVU for 12 seasons before Meloni left in a contract dispute.

They have reunited on several occasions since, including at a 2013 event for Hargitay's Joyful Heart Foundation charity.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



INSTAGRAM

JOHANNA SCHNELLER
WHAT I'M WATCHING

Real-life Jeopardy more than a game

THE SHOW: Jeopardy, December 20, 2016
THE MOMENT: The sixth win

The late Cindy Stowell pictured with Alex Trebek. CONTRIBUTED

You could feel North America holding its breath. Cindy Stowell, who died from colon cancer on December 5th, was still alive on Jeopardy, after winning five games in a row. (She taped her games in August. The producers and host Alex Trebek knew of her condition; her opponents didn't.)

But here in the sixth game, things are looking dire for the tiny, soft-spoken science content developer with the chic pixie haircut. She enters the final jeopardy round well behind opponent Julia Kite. The question is insanely specific: "If this U.S. state was a country, it would have been in the top 10 in gold medals with 14 — 9 of them by one man and one woman."

Cindy unveils her answer: Maryland. Correct (Michael Phelps is a Marylander). She unveils her wager: $10,201.00. That puts her one dollar ahead of Julia.

Julia unveils her answer: Ohio. America whoops.

You don't really think of Jeopardy as a marketing mastermind, but they are handling this expertly. They kept Cindy's illness quiet for her first few games. As she approached win number five, a story appeared in The New York Times, and went viral.

Now, at the end of this divisive year, Americans of all stripes are gathering before their TVs as if they're hearths, at that time of evening when the holiday lights begin to twinkle, to root together for someone because she's tough and humble and intelligent.

Cindy's six-day total is $103,803, which she's donating to cancer research. Expect high ratings for tonight's show. Somewhere, Charles Dickens is smiling.

Johanna Schneller is a media connoisseur who zeroes in on pop-culture moments. She appears Monday through Thursday.

metro HOME
Your essential daily news

A snow globe starring a loved one makes a great DIY gift

MEET THE CONDO

Own in Quarry Park

THE GATES

CONTRIBUTED

Project overview

This boutique 32-unit condo project comes with impressive standard features, over-sized windows, granite counters, professional stainless steel appliances and airy nine-foot ceilings, located in a stunning park-like setting. There is a multitude of amenities and recreational opportunities in this community.

Housing amenities

Bicycle storage, storage lockers and beautifully landscaped grounds in a park-like setting accentuate this project. There is also a 100,000-square-foot Remington YMCA featuring pools, library, fitness centre, running track, gymnasium and multi-purpose rooms.

Location and transit

Quarry Park is a popular community to work, live and play with BRT route 302 to downtown and future LRT route all within minutes of your door. There is also nearby access to Glenmore Trail, Deerfoot Trail and other major roads.

In the neighbourhood

The neighbourhood is close to a 50-acre natural reserve alongside the Bow River, and just a five minute drive to the Quarry Market featuring Co-op grocery and liquor, Original Joes, The Park, Merle Norman, Starbucks and many others.

KRISTA SYLVESTER/FOR METRO

NEED TO KNOW

What: The Gates
Builder: Remington Development Corp.
Location: 39 Quarry Gate S.E
Building: Three-storey building with 32 units
Sizes: 770 to 1,315 sq. ft.
Pricing: One bed from $290s, two beds from $360s
Suites: Seven different floor plans featuring one, two bedroom and three bedroom options
Status: Immediate possession
Sales Centre: 350 Quarry Park Blvd S.E
Phone: 403-930-6900
Website: remingtoncorp.com/residential

REAL ESTATE

What's hot on the market

1 PRE-SELLING

Avenue33 by Sarina: This five-story mixed-use development features 40 residential boutiques and lofts in the heart of Marda Loop, with access to 130 nearby shops, services and restaurants. Check out the Sales Centre at 1915 33 Ave. S.W.

2 STILL SELLING

6th And Tenth By Lamb Development Corp: Units in 31-storey condo tower start at $215,900 and put you right downtown with access to everything. For more information visit the Presentation Centre located at the southeast corner of 10th Ave. and 6th St. S.W.

3 STILL SELLING

Smith by Grosvenor: Perfectly located in the city's bustling Beltline, Smith features 129 boutique style homes in the heart of the city's cultural district. Check out the Presentation Centre located at the 2nd floor of 850 16th Ave. S.W.

KRISTA SYLVESTER/FOR METRO

metro SPORTS

A new NBA labour deal was reportedly on the verge of being finalized after owners voted Wednesday to approve a proposed seven-year CBA

Second most points is 'like No. 1' to Jagr

NHL

Czech scoffs at catching Gretzky on all-time list

Jaromir Jagr knows No. 2 is as high as he'll go on the NHL career scoring list.

In his mind, that's a record in itself.

Jagr's next point will be the 1,888th of his career and give him outright possession of second place on the all-time NHL points list, breaking a tie with Mark Messier. Only Wayne Gretzky's total of 2,857 is better than that, and Jagr — the 44-year-old Florida Panthers forward who has said he can see himself playing until he's 50 — knows the top spot is going to stay far from his reach.

"For me, it's like No. 1," Jagr said recently when asked what passing Messier would mean. "I don't really count Wayne Gretzky. He was from another planet. I don't think he was from this planet. Whatever he did, it's unbreakable."

Jagr caught Messier on Tuesday with a three-assist effort in Florida's shootout win over Buffalo. His next chance for the tiebreaker is Thursday, when the Panthers play host to the Boston Bruins.

Jagr would have been No. 2 long ago if not for his leaving the NHL to play in Russia from 2008 through 2011. Jagr collected 146 points in those three seasons, deciding to play there in part because of the proximity to his parents in the Czech Republic. But he missed the NHL, returned to play with Philadelphia in 2011-12 — and has been collecting jerseys since, also logging time with Dallas, Boston, New Jersey and now Florida.

"It's an honour to be around him, get a little wisdom from him, get a few laughs from him," said Florida's Nick Bjugstad, who scored the goal that became point No. 1,887 for Jagr. "He's been nothing but awesome for our organization."

Including the playoffs, Tuesday's three-point game was the 215th of Jagr's career.

He's reached seven points in an NHL game twice, and that's not even close to his career best. He played one game in a German league in 1994-95 during an NHL work stoppage and racked up 11 points — one goal and 10 assists.

His first NHL point was a goal on Oct. 7, 1990, when he was the youngest player in the league at 18. The goalie who gave that one up was Chris Terreri, who was just in his second full NHL season and a relatively young player at 25. Terreri had a fine, full career and his last NHL game was 16 years ago. Jagr is still going, with no end in sight.

"The way he comes to work every single day is unbelievable," Panthers interim coach and general manager Tom Rowe said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Panthers right-wing Jaromir Jagr acknowledges the fans after he recorded the 1,887th point of his career on Tuesday in Sunrise, Fla. JOEL AUERBACH/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

> **I just enjoy every moment I get a chance to play in this league and try to do everything I can to stay in this league.** Jaromir Jagr

CFL

Stamps re-sign sack machine Hughes

Defensive end Charleston Hughes signed a two-year contract extension with the Calgary Stampeders on Wednesday.

Hughes, who had a CFL-high 16 sacks this season, was eligible to become a free agent in February. He also registered 47 tackles and three forced fumbles in being named a league all-star for the third time.

> **We have a lot of unfinished business and we just have to focus on getting even better as a team.** Charleston Hughes

"Charleston is a cornerstone of our defence and 2016 was another great season for him," Stampeders president/GM John Hufnagel said in a statement. "He has maintained a high level of play since he first came to Calgary and I look forward to more of the same in the future."

Hughes joined the Stampeders in 2008 and led the team in sacks in helping Calgary win a Grey Cup title as a rookie. He returned to the squad in '09 after attending training camp with the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles.

Hughes has 88 career sacks to stand second in Stampeders history behind Will Johnson (99). Hughes has appeared in 10 playoff games and three Grey Cups with Calgary. THE CANADIAN PRESS

MLB

Slugger taken aback by Jays' quick trigger

Edwin Encarnacion might have been signed to a new contract with the Blue Jays by now, had it not been for a compressed signing period that gave the popular slugger no time to consider his market, his agent says.

Paul Kinzer, who is representing Encarnacion in what is now a sluggish free agent market for power hitters, said Encarnacion was taken by surprise when Toronto signed Kendrys Morales "two days" after they offered him a reported four-year, $80-million deal.

"They told us they'd be signing other players, that wasn't a surprise to us," Kinzer told the Jeff Blair Show on Sportsnet radio Wednesday morning.

"But signing someone (Morales) two days later, that was a surprise."

Encarnacion remains unsigned, though Kinzer said his client has at least six offers to consider. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

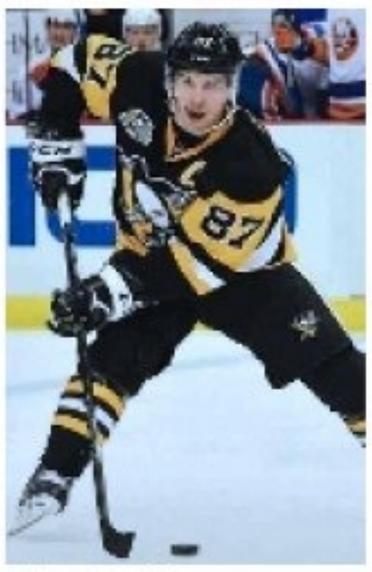
Edwin Encarnacion GETTY IMAGES

Streaking

The Columbus Blue Jackets set a franchise record by winning their 10th straight with a 3-2 shootout victory over the Kings on Tuesday. They also have points in 12 consecutive games, going 11-0-1, one short of matching a franchise-best 12-0-1 run to close the 2014-15 season.

Slumping

The New York Islanders power play has converted a league-worst 12 of 88 chances and has yet to score more than twice in one game. It's not as if the power play is contributing to wins. The Isles are 4-4-4 when scoring with the main advantage.



Sidney Crosby GETTY IMAGES

League leaders

22

Goals: Sidney Crosby, PIT

Points: Connor McDavid, EDM, 40

Game-winning goals: Artem Anisimov, CHI, and Jeff Carter, LA, 6

Ice time per game: Dustin Byfuglien, WIN, 27:36

Wins: Sergei Bobrovsky, CBJ, 19.

IN BRIEF

Canada rolls to another shutout in exhibition play

Anthony Cirelli struck twice and Tyson Jost added a goal and an assist Wednesday night as Canada defeated the Czech Republic 5-0 in pre-tournament play for the world junior hockey championship.

Connor Ingram stopped all 20 shots he faced for the shutout.

It was Canada's second straight shutout after blanking Finland 5-0 on Monday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canadian ski cross racers win silver, bronze medals

Germany's Heidi Zacher won gold Wednesday at the ski cross World Cup while Canadians Marielle Thompson and Georgia Simmerling joined her on the podium in Innichen, Italy.

Simmerling, from West Vancouver, B.C., had the lead for most of the big final before slipping to third. Thompson, from Whistler, B.C., took the silver to retain her lead in the season standings. THE CANADIAN PRESS

MAKE IT TONIGHT

Comforting Slow Cooker Chicken Stew

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

Just a bit of prep in the morning and you'll come home to a satisfying dinner.

Ready in 6 hours 10 minutes
Prep time: 10 minutes
Serves 4

Ingredients
- 6 chicken thighs
- 1 potato, peeled and cubed
- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 onions, chopped
- 4 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 Tbsp fresh thyme (1 tsp dried)
- 1 or 2 bay leaves
- 1/4 cup flour
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 cup fresh or frozen peas
- 1/2 cup light cream

Directions

1. In a Dutch oven or high-sided skillet, sauté onions, celery and carrots in splash of vegetable oil for about five minutes.

2. Add flour, thyme and bay leaves and stir for a minute. Add stock and stir until smooth. Simmer for 3 or 4 minutes until sauce thickens.

3. Add the potatoes and good pinch of salt and pepper.

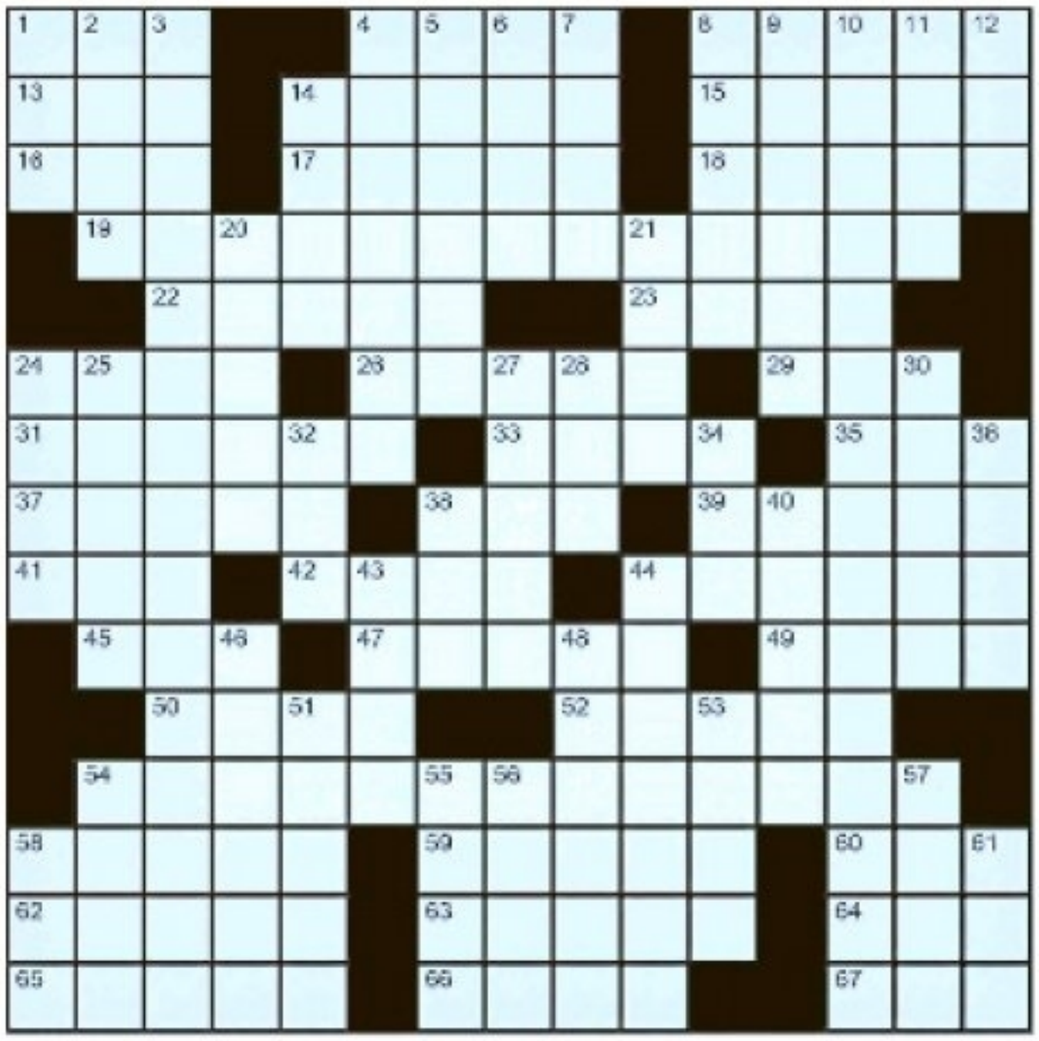
4. Place chicken thighs in the bottom of slow cooker and spoon the vegetable mixture over. Seal and set for 6 hours.

5. Add peas and cream and cook for 10 more minutes. Serve plain or over mashed potatoes.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Australian boot maker
4. Snowplow's creation
8. Cosmetics brand
13. For
14. Angels and Earthly Creatures writer, Elinor _
15. Jeweller's eye piece
16. Lawn roll
17. Chicago's airport
18. The _ (Poem by British poet William Blake)
19. Signs indicating that Santa and his delivery crew have just landed: 3 wds.
22. _ havoc
23. Nobel Peace Prize city
24. Money Object link: 2 wds.
26. French painter Mr. Dufy
29. Sotheby's fare
31. Liveliness
33. Mr. Kilmer's
35. Drummer Mr. Cool
37. Until this moment: 2 wds.
38. Tommy Jones connector
39. Laughs
41. Note before Lah
42. Air freshener target, variantly
44. Toronto college; or, Roman statesman
45. Never: German
47. On a ship, _ _ sea
49. Nero's 602
50. Coin insertion place
52. Canadian sweets shop, _ Secord
54. Bit of "We Three Kings of Orient Are": "Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying / Sealed in the _-_ _..."
58. Unflappable
59. Take apart shoelaces
60. Antiquity
62. _ _'oeuvre (Appetizer)
63. Self-righteous
64. Mr. Orbison
65. Showbiz performer Martha's
66. Canadian director Mr. Egoyan
67. _-inspiring

DOWN
1. Sit-_ (Exercises)
2. David of "Rhoda"
3. What it's predicted Rudolph will do at the end of his Christmas tune: 4 wds.
4. How to completely memorize something: 2 wds.
5. Sarah Palin's state
6. De _, Robert
7. Ardent
8. Some choral voices
9. One of Montreal's Concordia University campuses
10. Have fun with photos posing: 4 wds.
11. Imitates
12. "_ darn tootin'!"
14. Created tapestries
20. Storm aka _ Munroe, Halle Berry's character in "X-Men: Days of Future Past" (2014)
21. Bun
24. 'Violin' suffixes
25. Serving _ (Dinnertime utensil)
27. Obvious
28. Dubai's locale, commonly
30. Ms. Bingham of "Baywatch"
32. "Letters from _ Jima" (2006)
34. Particular pronoun
36. Mr. Morales
38. Mr. Ferrigno
40. Prefix meaning 'Male'
43. Fawn
44. The Olympic _, in Montreal
46. Author S.E. Hinton = Susan _ Hinton
48. The Beatles' 'Yellow Submarine' album tune: "It's _ _ Much"
51. Where musicians store their songs: 2 wds.
53. Driving 4x4s, commonly
54. Ancient colonnade
55. Lipton _-_-soup
56. Kool & The Gang's "Get Down _ _"
57. Gust
58. Stock unit [abbr.]
61. Hair tinter

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS Your daily horoscope by Francis Drake

Aries March 21 - April 20
This is a wonderful day to enjoy the company of others, especially partners and close friends. You also will enjoy dealing with members of the general public.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
Work-related travel is likely today. Fortunately, you feel upbeat and happy, especially relating to co-workers and customers. People will be honest and candid with you today.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
This is a fun-loving day! You will enjoy social outings, sports events and playful activities with children. Seek out opportunities to express your creative talents.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
Family conversations will go well today, especially with female relatives, moms and aunts. Explore real-estate opportunities; however, wait until tomorrow to act with purpose.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Today you feel quite content with your world. This is why you will enjoy chatting with siblings, neighbors and relatives. It feels good to be upbeat and optimistic.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
This is an excellent day for business and commerce. Travelling for work is very likely. Nevertheless, postpone important financial decisions until tomorrow.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Today it's easy to feel sympathetic and generous to others. In part, this is because you feel fortunate, but you also have a concern for the welfare of those who are less fortunate.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You feel content today, which is why you are happy to work behind the scenes. Your busy pace lately has been a bit exhausting, and you know it!

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
A conversation with a friend or a member of a group might encourage you to be more ambitious about your future goals. Consider these today; however, wait until tomorrow to finalize anything.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
People notice you today. They might even learn information about you. Just be aware of this in case you want to guard your privacy. Be aware of your reputation.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Do something different today, because you are upbeat and eager to explore new situations. In particular, you want to learn something new that interests you. Travel if you can.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
In many ways, you will benefit from others today. Someone might do you a favor or make a promise. Wait to find out if this promise will ring true.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

9				5				2
						3	8	
		2	9	1			6	
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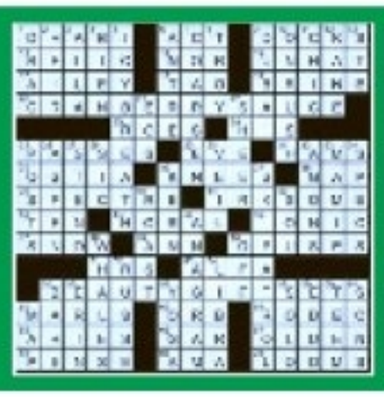

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2	8	1	9	7	3	5	6	4
4	7	5	2	1	6	8	9	3
9	3	6	5	4	8	7	2	1
6	5	2	1	3	9	4	8	7
3	4	7	8	6	2	1	5	9
8	1	9	4	5	7	6	3	2

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